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AUTHOR Gass, Michael; Dolcino, Carina
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ABSTRACT

The Family Expedition is a federally funded program designed to foster healthy changes in families with troubled adolescents through multifamily adventure therapy experiences. Each Family Expedition cycle is 4 months long, consisting of six multifamily sessions and three home visits. Each 90-minute home visit gives families time to focus on specific issues they may not wish to address in the multifamily group. During the initial home visit, the therapists affiliate with the family, outline the investment necessary for program participation, inform the family about potential change processes, introduce solution-oriented goal setting, and collect information for assessment and formulation of hypotheses. A useful model for guiding this first visit is the CHANGES model, which focuses on examining the client context, hypothesizing about potential client issues and resolutions, utilizing a novel action to determine the validity of therapists' hypotheses, generating information, evaluating initial hypotheses, and establishing potential solutions. The "novel action" is begun within the first 15 minutes in order to lower anxiety levels, engage all family members, and draw family members into a "safe but not too comfortable environment" in which their belief systems are projected onto the novel activity for the therapists to observe. Seven guidelines for home visits using the CHANGES model are outlined. A case example describes the use of the board game "Pass the Pigs" as part of assessment and goal setting. (Author/SV)

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THE FAMILY EXPEDITION PROGRAM: ADVENTURE FAMILY THERAPY IN THE HOME AS WELL AS IN THE OUTDOORS

Michael Gass
Project Director, Family Expedition Program, NH Hall, 124 Main Street, UNH, Durham, NH 03824 USA phone: (603) 862-2024 e-mail: mgass@christa.unh.edu

Carina Dolcino
Project Coordinator, Family Expedition Program, NH Hall, 124 Main Street, UNH, Durham, NH 03824 USA phone: (603) 862-2024 e-mail: mgass@christa.unh.edu

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THE FAMILY EXPEDITION PROGRAM: ADVENTURE FAMILY THERAPY IN THE HOME AS WELL AS IN THE OUTDOORS

Michael Gass
Project Director, Family Expedition Program, NH Hall, 124 Main Street, UNH, Durham, NH 03824 USA phone: (603) 862-2024 e-mail: mgass@christa.unh.edu

Carina Dolcino
Project Coordinator, Family Expedition Program, NH Hall, 124 Main Street, UNH, Durham, NH 03824 USA phone: (603) 862-2024 e-mail: mgass@christa.unh.edu

Abstract
This Program is designed to foster healthy changes in families with troubled adolescents through the use of multi-family adventure therapy experiences. This paper will describe the value and conduct of the home visit portion of this program and the use of a novel activity for assessment and goal setting.

The Family Expedition is a federally funded program (US Department of Education) designed to foster healthy changes in families with troubled adolescents through the use of multi-family adventure therapy experiences. Each Family Expedition cycle is four months long, consisting of six multi-family sessions and three home visits. The home visit component of the program is an integral piece of the Family Expedition Program. Visits are opportunities to highlight learnings, reflect on and integrate experiences, and revisit family goals. Most importantly, each 90-minute home visit gives families time to focus on specific issues they may not feel like addressing in the presence of the larger, multi-family group.

While the second and third home visits are tailored around specific interventions for each family in the initial home visit a great deal of time is spent focusing on assessment and screening. The goals of the initial visit are to affiliate with the family, outline the investment necessary for program participation, inform the family about potential change processes, introduce solution-oriented goal setting, and collect information for the purpose of assessment, screening, and the formulation of CHANGE hypotheses.

One theoretical model particularly helpful in guiding the initial home visit is the CHANGES model developed by Gass and Gillis (1995a). The CHANGES model is organized into six interactive steps focusing on acquiring information for developing functional client change. These steps include: (1) examining the client *context*, (2)*hypothesizing* about potential issues and resolutions for client issues (3) utilizing an *action that is novel* to determine the validity of therapists' hypotheses, (4) *generating information*, from clients for potential interventions, (5) *evaluation* of initial hypotheses with appropriate revisions, and (6) the establishment of potential *solutions*.

When conducting home visits, the following seven guidelines from Berg (1994) are used to help foster the implementation of the CHANGES model: (1) set the tone for a friendly, positive atmosphere, (2) use normal, everyday, conversational language in a friendly, soft tone with neutral words and phrases, (3) trust your own judgment and intuition with client interactions, being particularly willing to acknowledging a lack of information, making clients "experts" at the details of the situation, (4) utilize yourself as a "tool" for helping clients, using common sense, observational skills, and senses, (5) maintain a positive, hopeful view of clients and your work with them, (6) pay attention to parents as well as children (e.g., many parents are isolated and lonely and can become easily threatened when the therapist pays an inordinate amount of attention to the children, and (7) when parents make complaints about their children, recognize this as a clue that they need to find ways to compliment some aspect of their parenting (p. 20).

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General Structure

In the first visit, it is not uncommon for some family members to have no idea why program staff are there. Despite initial phone calls and other sources of information, it is necessary to provide a broad overview of the program and the purpose of the first visit. During this time, therapists engage in creating the initial hypotheses discussed earlier, taking mental notes of the surroundings, where individual family members are seated, and what roles each family member is playing. Therapists with the Family Expedition Program have found it is best to move into the activity phase (i.e., a novel action) within the first 15 minutes of the visit. This tends to lower anxiety levels, engage all family members, and provide "news of a difference" (deShazer, 1982) from typical home visits or therapy office experiences. Another reason is to induce clients into a belief system of a "safe but not too comfortable environment," drawing family members into a process where their belief systems will be projected on to the novel activity so the therapist is able to generate information about the family's process.

One novel activity the Program utilizes is a classic Milton Bradley game entitled "Pass the Pigs." It is our experience that very few families have played this game together as a family. As seen in the CHANGES model, the novel action in this game provides an opportunity for play, cooperation, collaboration, and family goal-setting to naturally present themselves. Cade and O'Hanlon (1993) speak about the changing the way that clients "view and do." Novel, experiential activities foster this change when the experiences are framed so that success is reached through this new way of viewing and doing. In this initial home visit, solution-focused goal setting (Gass & Gillis, 1995b; Waller & Peller, 1992) is also used as a "new way" of viewing and doing.

Case Example In "Passing The Pigs" Assessment

Background information (Note: Clients' names and identifying features have been changed to protect client confidentiality): The mother was referred by her minister who thought that the family could benefit from the Program. In an often choked-up voice, the mother explained that the past year had been very difficult for her family. She mentioned that her twin fourteen-year-old daughters ("Patty" and "Ann") suffered from a variety of symptoms and behaviors including substance abuse, eating disorders, depression, and suicidal ideation. There also is a seventeen-year-old son ("Junior") who, according to the mother, is "perfect" and "has never given us (his parents) an ounce of trouble." In the parents' struggle to help their daughters, they tried "everything" including grounding them, sending them away to family members in other states, psychiatrists, therapists and parochial schools. The twins have seen a variety of therapists and psychiatrists for a year. The family went to family therapy for three months, but it only seemed to make things worse so they discontinued going. At the time of the initial home visit, the mother was seeking other providers for her daughters and the family. The mother reported a lack of confidence with the daughters' current therapists and doctor since they were reluctant to identify the substance abuse; they told the mother that the twins were merely "self-medicating their pain." The twins were quite happy with their therapists, although they didn't protest the search for new providers.

The visit began with an introduction about the nature and purpose of the visit and program taking about 15 minutes. The following scenario unfolded during the "Pass the Pigs" activity:

FEP: Okay, now that I've given you a brief overview of the program, let's do a 15-minute activity. I've brought a game called Pass the Pigs. Has anyone ever heard of it? (heads shake no). Well, I find this game so fascinating because it is a lot like the Family Expedition Program. In this game, everyone will be taking risks. Realistically, you also are taking a risk just by having Robin and me, total strangers, in your home. Although I gave you some information about the program, you really won't know what it's like until you get there. Some people see risk as doing something when you're not sure what the outcome will be...the same can be true for "Pass the Pigs." You roll the two pigs and you get a certain amount of points for each roll. You may want

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to avoid "pigging out" which looks like this (both pigs land on their sides with only one dot showing). If you roll a "pigout" then you cannot record the points you got on this turn and the next person rolls. As you can see, every time you roll you take the risk that you might pig out. Now the interesting thing about this game is that you're not playing alone; you're going to be playing with your family, the people that probably know and love you the most.

You play as a family by combining your scores. Your individual victory contributes to your family's overall success, just like in the game of Life. And even though you're playing for a family score, you still have individual choice that can affect everyone in your family. If you roll anything other than a "pig out," then you have the choice to roll again or stop and add your points to the family score. One thing that some individuals have found to be helpful is to ask for advice from their family as to whether or not they should roll again, and in this way there may be more support and everyone shares in the victories as well as the "pig outs."

Oh yes, there is one other thing. In the Family Expedition Program we present the activity and ask families to set their own goals or picture of success. Before you begin playing, we'd like you to please set a family goal that makes sense for you. It can be around obtaining a certain amount of points or pig positions or anything else. In doing this keep in mind that you only have 15 minutes to play the game so you'll want to set realistic goals.

Dad: What's our goal?
Jr.: What do we need a goal for?
Dad: She asked us to have a goal.
Jr: Let's get to 100 pts.
Dad: She said our goal didn't have to be pts.
Jr: What's wrong with going for pts.?
Patty: Let's go for 100 pts.
Ann: Yeah.
Dad: Why set the goal for maximum points. If we don't get it then we're setting ourselves up for failure.
Ann: Who cares, let's just play!
Jr: Let up on the goal thing Dad. Stop! (Dad looks like he's about to say something) Just let it go! Jeez you do this all the time!
Patty: That is so true!
FEP: Do what?
Jr: He's always trying to complicate stuff and harping on one thing that doesn't matter anyway. (Turning to dad) Our goal is not to have a goal OK? (He grabs the pigs from the center of the table and rolls them, scores a few points...the pigs are passed)
Patty: Dad likes to carry on, try to get us riled up.
Dad: I'm trying to guide you...I could set the goal but I want your opinions.
Jr: Just make the goal and then we'll agree.
Dad: But the point of this is to come to a family goal.
Jr: Argh!
Patty: (rolled eyes)
Ann: Oh boy!

They continue the game. Dad looks hurt and angry. Mom remains silent during the game. Dad has now "clammed up" too. Despite being obviously frustrated, Junior continues to play the game by keeping his head down so that he doesn't have to make eye contact with anyone. During the game no one in the family asks for advice from others. There is a little encouragement when a particularly good score is rolled. Jr. keeps score and then mom takes over. Mom has missed several turns. Patty takes the lead in keeping the game moving by being enthusiastic and attempting to smooth things over by joking with Dad and Jr. The therapist "counts down" the last few seconds of their fifteen minutes.

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FEP: You know, in the Family Expedition Program we play games and do various activities. Sometimes the activities can get pretty silly, like rolling little pigs. But what we try to do is to see what it is we might have learned in the activity that we can use at home to make things better. I wonder what you noticed about yourself or your family? (silence for 30 seconds)
Jr: Things used to be easy until Ann and Patty went into seventh grade. Then everything changed.
FEP: What changed?
Jr: They did!
FEP: In what way?
Patty: We became a little wilder.
Dad: A little!
Ann: It started out by being a little.
Patty Then we got carried away.
FEP: What happened?
Patty: We didn't want to be around our family anymore. We wanted to be with our friends, do what we wanted.
Mom: You were making poor choices.
Patty: You just want us to be just like you and dad- boring! You want perfect kids but guess what you got us- so live with it!
Dad: You see, (turning to the therapist) they want to do their own thing but they're young and they don't know about all the trouble they could get in..
FEP: You love them and don't want to see them hurt.
Mom: We had to do something because they were out of control.
Ann: If you guys weren't so strict we wouldn't have to do this!
FEP: OK, timeout. I can see that there are a lot of strong feelings and issues bouncing off the walls but unfortunately we don't have the time to get into them. I'm impressed that you're so willing to put the issues on the table like that. What I am curious about are the times that there were some positive things going on in your family, when you were being successful in playing this game?
Mom: We got 88 points.
Jr: Yeah but our goal was 100.
Dad: Well we didn't all agree to that goal.
Patty: Dad!
Ann: Dad!
Mom: I don't think 88 points is so bad...
FEP: That's right, you did make 88% of your goal on your first attempt. That's like playing a new sport and making it into the quarter-finals. Even though you might not of had total agreement on a goal you still got somewhere. What was happening that made you as successful as you were?
Ann: We didn't let not having a goal get in the way of playing the game.
Patty: Everyone played.
Jr: I got a double razorback.
Patty: We helped each other figure out the game and scores and stuff.
FEP: It is interesting to see that definitely some positive things were happening even though people were disagreeing, correct? (Heads nod in agreement.) That's probably true for your family now as well. When you think about what's going well and what's not, what would you like to get out of this program?

At this point and based on this information, the therapist utilizes a goal-setting process that centers around solution-focused adventure therapy (e.g., Gass & Gillis, 1995b). Such goals are designed to be specific, realistic, within control of the family, based upon what they will be doing, and in their own words. Adventure experiences in the multi-family sessions are designed to provide this family with opportunities to strive for their goals using these processes. Other

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associated aspects (e.g., levels of trust, how they support one another, cooperation, mutual respect and goal setting skills) also occur to support the development of functional change. (To find out how this family was affected by future interventions, readers can refer to the upcoming *Adventure Family Therapy* book soon to be published by the authors).

Based on this outlook, the Program provides "news of a difference" where the family finds success when before there may have been defeat. This solution-focused approach is designed to give the family an opportunity to look at the things that are going well and to do more of it, or to do something different in cases where things aren't working. Multi-family sessions provide rich opportunities for families to learn what works for other families and incorporate appropriate strategies into their own family.

Summary

Resistance is viewed as feedback to therapists that they have "missed" critical information on what is going on with the family. Given this informations, assessment of the system is readjusted and alternative interventions are implemented (i.e., "re-hypothesizing" in the CHANGES model). It also seems that resistance is much easier to address due to the fun and positive nature of the adventure experiences (i.e., when people are engaged and enjoying themselves they are more willing to provide information about what they want, do well, and cooperate with the faciliator). Such activities provide families with a non-threatening environment where they can learn more about themselves and their family members.

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